A STRAY LETTER.

Sweet coz, I really meant to write,
In answer to your last,
A week ago this very night;
Dear me, how time has passed!
You see I've been so busy, love—
And now you know the reason
Of my neglect—from morn till night
Preparing for the season.

Mamma and I together shopped
For one whole week and more,
And all day long we never stopped,
But went from store to store
All through Broadway, both up and down,
On either side the street;
And oh, such patterns! I declare
None ever were so sweet.

We bought, dear me! now let me see,
Twelve dresses for Mamma;
And for myself just twenty-three—
You should have heard Papa
Go on about the bills, he talked
Like one bereft of reason,
As if we both could live without
Our wardrobe for the season.

Oh dear! the men are heartless quite;
I fear my heart will break,
To think, sweet coz, I lay last night
One whole long hour awake—
For oh, to hear Pa talk such stuff,
And prophesy distresses;
I vow I haven't half enough
With fifty different dresses!

I feel so tired, so very tired
With working hard all day,
I fear I sha'n't make out to write
The half I've got to say,
I never sew, good gracious! no,
I leave that to Miss Prink—
But then it is such weary work
To have to sit and think.

To think what buttons, white or brown,
For this dress and for that,
What sort of trimming will look best,
What flowers for your hat,
And then to-day I've wound four skeins,
And one of them was double,
While all required the nicest pains,
And gave me so much trouble!

And oh, the trying on, it's worse
Than all the rest beside!
This neck is high, this waist too short,
This sleeve a trifle wide,
I'm like a martyr at the stake,
Alas! it's no use sighing;
I'd rather sit all day and make
Than be forever trying.

To think a whole week has gone by
Since I received a call,
For we're so busy, Ma and I,
We don't receive at all,
I'm almost dying, too, to know
About my friends the Chases,
What goods they bought, we met, at least,
In fifty different places.

Of satins, silks, delaines, berege,
My brain is always teeming,
Of tarltons, poplins, muslins, tulle
I am forever dreaming.
In visions through the night I see
All round me cherub faces,
With wings of gauze, look out and smile
From clouds composed of laces.

The clock's at twelve, my ormolu,
Its silvery stroke I hear;
And now, sweet coz, I'll say adieu,
A thousand kisses, dear,
Ma chere amie, I've nothing more
Particular to tell,
So for the present *au revoir*,
From yours sincerely—Belle.

AGRICULTURAL.

Field Corn.

Every man has a definite notion of what field corn is, yet how different are these ideas! To the Canadian or Maine reader it means a little five-foot variety, with eight-inch ears, and eight-rowed; the kernels usually yellow as gold, and hard as flint. He plants it in rows three feet apart, and in hills twenty to twenty-four inches apart in the rows. It may be planted in June, and cut up in ninety days. To the Connecticut Valley and New York farmers field corn is larger, coarser, taller, of larger ears, of more various colors and qualities—planted in hills three to three and a half feet apart, usually in May, and harvested in September, allowing one hundred and twenty or more days for it to mature enough to be cut up. As we go West and South the size of the plant and the length of season required for its development and perfection increase; four and five feet apart is no unusual distance to find the hills, and the ears, instead of being eight-rowed and twelve to fourteen inches long, as in the Middle and Eastern States, are short, thick, and twelve to twenty rowed, while the kernels lose their flinty character, in a measure, and gain a certain mealiness, and in shape resemble a gourd seed or horse's tooth. The varieties of corn are *almost* infinite (if we may use the expression); and yet it is remarkable that the plant is everywhere governed by the same rules of culture, and instructions good for Maine will apply in Louisiana.

Corn needs a deep and rich soil, or especial manuring, and the ground must be dry and warm. The culture should be thorough previous to pulverization, with the dissemination of manure through the soil, by ploughing and harrowing, unless, indeed, the corn be planted on a good sward, turned under, in which case manuring with a good compost, stable manure, or some concentrated fertilizer in the hill is desirable on soils which need manuring to ensure a good crop. After planting the culture should consist in keeping the weeds down, and the surface free and open, for the action of the air and the absorption of dew and other moisture.

The stalks should not be so crowded that they cannot mature well; and if the culture be thorough, farmers generally err in putting the drills too far apart, and letting too many stalks stand in each hill. It is much more economical of space to plant in drills; the stalks a foot apart, and the drills thirty inches to four and a half feet, according to the variety, this distance being a little less than half the height of the stalks on an average. Never allow more than four stalks to a hill. If all the culture is to be done by horse-power, it pays to sacrifice a little of the land to convenience, and put the corn in hills equally distant, and in true rows, running both ways.—*New York Agriculturist.*

Sheep.

We are strong advocates for shearing sheep unwashed. They may thus be sheared much earlier; there is little danger of their taking cold; the coolness of the weather is supposed to influence a more rapid renewing of their covering; and by the time the Summer's sun beats down hot and scorching upon their backs, they are sufficiently protected not to be blistered, as sometimes happens in late shorn flocks. All flocks ought to be dipped after shearing. Unless the ticks or lice are very thick, the dipping should be postponed till warmer weather than we usually have in May. The gradual accustoming of sheep to grass is quite as important as the same treatment for neat cattle. Do not withhold the grain, but keep it up until after the flock is well established upon grass. They should also be turned to grass gradually, two or three hours a day, in addition to their full regular feeding of hay, etc. No one should overlook the great value of his stock as manure-makers. This will in many parts of the country make it very remunerative to have the cows all yarded or stabled at night and the sheep folded.

Grape Vines

may yet be planted. In most localities the vines are already tied to the trellis; but where there are late frosts it is better to leave them on the ground, where they can be protected. In putting them up after the buds have started there is great danger of injuring the young shoots by careless handling. Whatever may be the system upon which a vine is to be trained, it must first be prepared for the operation, and the attention of the cultivator must be devoted to getting a strong plant to work upon. The proper way to do this is to let a young vine grow only one shoot the first year. The second year two buds are to be permitted to grow. Those who begin thus will have a vine upon which they may practise any kind of training they please.

To Destroy House Flies.

House flies may be effectually destroyed without the use of poison. Take half a teaspoonful of black pepper in powder, one teaspoonful of brown sugar, and one teaspoonful of cream; mix them well together, and place them in the room on a plate, where the flies are troublesome, and they will soon disappear.

UNINTENTIONAL INFLUENCE.

It is thought by many persons that we each carry with us a certain atmosphere, or a mesmeric influence, by which we affect others in various ways. However this may be, or however unconscious we may be of our own influence on those around us, we cannot be insensible to the different effects produced on ourselves by the various persons with whom we come in contact. There are those whom we sincerely respect, and with whose personal appearance, conversation, and manners we can find no very definite fault; and yet we feel ourselves repulsed by an unpleasant *something* which we cannot explain. So there are others who draw us to themselves by an indefinable charm.

One friend brings into our dwelling a glow as of sunshine, while the influence of another is like the softer radiance of the moonlight. One receives us like a sea-breeze after a sultry day; and yet with another this breeziness is carried to such an excess that there is no more repose for us in that presence than in a gale of wind. One will so put his soul into a smile, or a warm grasp of the hand, that we shall be the happier from the memory of it for hours or even days afterward; but there are others, alas! poor souls! whose influence grates on the nerves like the creaking of a door or a discord in music.

I recollect, years ago, attending morning prayers in an Episcopal church, in one of the cities of a neighboring State, on New Year's Day. The service was an interesting one, and the greetings that followed were very pleasant, especially one from a lady, who, although we were unknown to each other even by name, gave me her cordial good wishes. On our way home we met a person, also a stranger, the expression of whose face, in contrast with the scene we had left, chilled us like a blast from the polar regions. Was the man sensible of being out of harmony with the cheerful life around him?

I have sometimes compared the influence of certain friends to the varying perfumes of certain plants or flowers. One excellent woman, not particularly pleasing in outward appearance, but gifted with abundance of practical wisdom and energy, and most true in the Christian discharge of difficult duties, was like the refreshing odor of some of the aromatic herbs. Another, a young lady, who combined with a good deal of personal beauty a mind of rare loveliness and spirituality, reminded me of the ethereal fragrance of the heliotrope. Neither character could by any possibility be transformed into the other; but each was excellent in its own place and way.

The question may arise, How far are we accountable for those subtle influences that go out from us? Undoubtedly there are some characteristics so inherent in our individual natures that we cannot change them; but over the voluntary manifestations of our varying moods, and even our permanent feelings, we should exercise control from Christian principle, as they affect, more or less, the comfort and happiness of those around us.—*Monthly Religious Magazine.*

AMERICAN VELVET.

The machinery for the manufacture of American velvet was introduced into this country by the inventor, a Mr. Holt, of Cheshire, England, and its superiority in the matter of rapidity is said to be as great as that of the modern railroads over the stage-coach system. The method is as follows: Grooved brass rods or wires were placed under the web which forms the pile, secured by threads woven into the warp. The weaver cuts the threads by means of a knife held in the hand, the blade of which slides along the groove, dividing the pile into two rows of threads, thus giving a nap or pile of the depth inserted. The manufacture, according to the patented method, is accomplished by weaving two warps or foundations, with a middle warp alternately rising into the upper and lower, being secured by two shuttles moving at once. The knife moves horizontally, in the same direction as the shuttles, and the two warps and the pile between are divided, and the naps are cut out equal lengths. Two piled fabrics, the exact counterpart of each other, are thus made at one time. The shuttles and knives are all impelled by the ordinary motions of the power-loom. The statement that one hundred and ten picks or threads are made in a minute (or nearly two every second) will give some idea of the rapidity of the manufacture. A man with the patented machine can make from fifty to sixty yards per week, while eight or ten yards would be a good week's work for same person should he make use of the ordinary hand-loom. The saving of labor by this process over the wire-weaving method is estimated at from fifty to seventy per cent., while the fabrics are equal and in some respects superior to those of foreign make. The looms are adapted to the manufacture of piled fabrics, such as silk plush, since an article of this nature for gentlemen's caps has become very popular as a substitute for fur. Tartan or clan velvets are also made.

FOR YOUTHFUL READERS.

The Lost Child.

All along the beautiful German rivers you can see, scattered on the over-hanging hills, gray ivy-castles. Some of them are crumbling into ruins, and some are as steady and as grand as ever. Dreary they look to us, as places to live in, but they have all been pleasant homes once, for love can make any home pleasant. In one of these castles, some years ago, there lived a beautiful lady and little girl. This lady's husband was a soldier, and had gone away to fight in a foreign war; so she was all alone, except her servants and her child, little Gretchen; that is the same as Margaret—it means a pearl, you know, and she was more precious to her mother than many pearls, for Lady Gertrude, as the people called her, loved that little girl more than her own life. Gretchen had a sweet voice, as many of the German children have, and it made the old castle glad as she ran about in the lonely rooms, singing the ballads which her mother used to teach her.

One time her mother had to go to a distant city, and leave Gretchen with her nurse. It was the first time in her life that she had left her darling for so long a time. Many were the commands which she gave the servants to look after and for her child, but they were careless, and Gretchen was left to wander round at her pleasure, even outside the gates of the castle. It was nearly sunset one afternoon when a band of strolling players, who had been hanging around the castle, were surprised at hearing a sweet baby voice sing over their ballads, and at seeing Gretchen's pretty childish figure among them.

Her love of their songs had led her to follow these roving players so far that now it was nearly nightfall and she could not find her way home, and with tearful eyes she begged the old woman who saw her first to take her to her mamma. It was growing cold, and her little dress of thinnest lawn was but poor protection. She clasped her hands and cried bitterly: "Take me home, please take me home. I am mamma's pearl, and if I get lost she will die; see, this is my mamma," and she drew from her bosom a little miniature of the Lady Gertrude. It was set with pearls and brilliants; the old woman's hand grasped it eagerly, but Gretchen's look of agony stopped her.

"We'll take you home," they said, "but your home is a great way from here."

So they dressed her like a gipsy child and led her with them, far away from the Lady Gertrude, far from the castle by the joining river, and far from all the pleasant things which made up Gretchen's home. And when she would beg them to take her home they would tell her that she was going toward her home, but it was a great way off. They took the miniature and broke off its exquisite setting, leaving only the painting that she bore around her neck still, for the picture was all she cared for.

The lady of the castle returned, and there was mourning far and wide for the lost child, the darling of the castle. They searched for her many weeks, but their search was useless, and finally they said she must have been drowned in the river or lost in the forest, but no one dared to whisper it to the lady of the castle, for fear it would break her heart. And so the light of the castle went out for Lady Gertrude, and all its beauty faded. The roses clustered over the lattice and hung in crimson wreathes around her window; and they faded, and the green pines were heavy and white with the snows of Winter; but it was all alike to her; the light of her life had faded too.

Her harp was untouched in the hall, for the only music which she could bear to hear was the music of Gretchen's sweet childish voice as it sung in her heart forever. Years went by, and her friends used every effort to comfort her in her sorrow; and she went with them to Gretchen's room for the first time since her loss. The moon shone clear and bright that evening on the little bed and its snowy covering, and pillows where she had so often watched her rosy sleep; and the mother knelt by the little bed, and prayed earnestly that God would give her back her darling in His own good time, and help her to say, "Thy will be done."

They went out together, the knight Siegfried and his lady. And all the land was full of their deeds of kindness. The whole hope of her life seemed to be that she might comfort all who were in sorrow, even as she hoped that God would one day comfort her. But her sorrow took away her strength and health, and they went at last, the knight and his lady, to seek for both in sunny Italy. Her sickness was such as no change of climate could cure; not even the sweet blue skies of Florence and the breath of its thousand flowers. Yet there was always in her heart a faint hope that one day her darling would come back to her. It grew fainter every day, and she never breathed it to any one. She was thinking about it one pleasant afternoon in early Spring as she lay on a couch by an open window. They had taken her there, for she was scarcely able to walk through the room. She lay watching the busy crowds in the streets, for it was a feast day, and the flower girls went in and out among the crowd, bearing their fragrant burdens.

"Take these flowers, lady," said a sweet voice by the window, and a fair-haired girl in a festal dress looked pityingly at her, and laid a spray of snowy japonicas upon the window seat. She spoke Italian, but not as the natives speak; and although very sunburnt, yet her golden hair and blue eyes looked strangely out of place among the dark-eyed Florentines. Something in her voice sounded strangely familiar to the Lady Gertrude—something like echoes which had long lingered in her heart. The flower girl had given the sweetest flowers in her basket to the sick stranger, and hastened away, trilling, as she went, a few notes of a little song, the same that used to echo through the halls in the old castle by the river. The lady called her back and asked her all about her home. Was she a Florentine? She could remember but very little about her early life. She had not always lived in Florence. It was a long, long way off; when she lived far north, when she had a mother. She had her mother's picture with her, and she drew from her bosom the little broken miniature.

It was there, just as she herself had clasped it on Gretchen's neck, so many years ago; and as the lady looked at it, she scarcely recognized it for her own picture. That was so bright and beautiful, and she herself was worn and faded with long watching and sorrow. She spoke in German, and called her by the endearing names that she used to at home, until at last the flower girl became conscious of the truth, and as it flashed on her mind, she sunk beside the couch and buried her face in the folds of her mother's dress; and the two wept together for the joy of their hearts. The sunset died over the river and the stars came out in the sky while mother and child sat together in happiness too deep for words. And health and strength came back to the mother, and before many weeks were passed they went back to Germany, and Gretchen, their own daughter, went with them to be the light of the castle, the sunshine of the Lady Gertrude's heart, as she had been in years gone by. In that Italian city there is a little church, a perfect gem of architectural beauty; a grateful mother had lavished upon it all that wealth could procure or the most perfect taste devise. The altar cloth is of pure white velvet, and Lady Gertrude's bridal dress, and in its fringes are woven with cunning artifice the richest of the jewels which had long been the pride of Lord Siegfried's family and her own. In the floor of the church there is set a little tablet telling in a few German words, in antique characters, the story of Lady Gertrude's life: "I have found my child."

AFFECTION BEAUTIFULLY DISPLAYED.

Monsieur D—— and his wife were rich to luxuriance; but they had a daughter, the eldest, in whom their pride had once centred, who, by a sad dispensation of Providence, was rendered a cripple for life. No marriage and no betrothment lay before her desolate and widowed maidenhood. But the parents, with a tenderness worthy of all emulation, atoned for the lack of wooers by the constancy and delicacy of their devotion; and as her age drew on to maturity, they determined to surprise their unfortunate child with such show of splendor and such token of their love as should keep the smiles upon her pale face, and lend such relief as friends could lend to the desolation of her lot.

A new suite of apartments were added to their rooms, unknown to her, and furnished with the richest of Parisian decorations. New jewels were purchased and displayed upon the delicately-wrought toilet-tables; a new portrait of her pale face, done at the hands of the most distinguished artist, hung upon the wall; and chairs and lounges, rich with brocade, invited to repose and languor. Garlands and vases of orange flowers perfumed the air; gifts from scores of friends were scattered around; and everything bespoke the apparel and the pleasures of a bride.

Upon the expected birthday all the dearest friends of the poor girl were invited to a *fete*; and by magic, as it seemed, the new apartments were thrown open to her bewildered gaze, and every article of luxury was blazoned with her cipher.

The child turned inquiringly to her parents, and by their caresses was taught that this was her bridal day; since now she was wedded anew, by all these tokens, to her father's and her mother's love, which would watch over her in the new and brilliant home always. Here, too, she could invite, when and as she chose, the friends of her girlhood; and if fate had made her lot one of maidenly retirement, it was yet quickened with all the luxuries of wealth, and the better wealth of parental tenderness.

Say what we will of the French, there is very much in their domestic relations to be zealously admired. Not anywhere in the wide world does a son so cling to the father, or the father to the son.

HABITS OF THE WASP.

The subterfuges resorted to by animals in search of food have been regarded by the general reader as the most interesting and instructive portion of the works of naturalists. An incident illustrative of the cunning of the wasp was recently related to us by an observing gentleman. A blue wasp, known as the solitary wasp, because it lives alone in its little clay nest, was seen to hurl itself upon the strong wheel-shaped web of a large spider. Here it set up a loud buzzing, like that of a fly when accidentally entangled in a similar web. The spider, watching at the door of his silken domicile, stole cautiously forth. His advance was slow, for he evidently felt that he was approaching no common enemy. The apparently desperate yet fruitless efforts of the wasp to free himself encouraged the spider and lured him forward. But when within some three inches of his intended victim the wasp suddenly freed himself from his mock entanglement, and darting upon the poor spider, in a moment, as it were, pierced him with his deadly sting in a hundred places. The wasp then bore his ill-gotten spoil to his lonely home. This home is built of clay, thimble-shaped, and originally containing but one apartment. In the lower part of this *cul-de-sac* the wasp deposits its eggs. Immediately over them it draws a thin glutinous curtain. Upon this curtain it packs away the proceeds of its hunting excursions, such as spiders, flies, and all other insects which it regards as suitable food for its young. Consequently, when the young escape from the ova, they find above them a well-stocked larder, and gradually eat their way through the choice depository, finally appearing to the delighted world in the agreeable form and stature of perfect wasps.

WIT AND HUMOR.

What plaything is above every other? The top.

When is a man thinner than a lath? When he's a-shavin'.

Trifles often fill up the measure of human character and actions.

It is not the varnish upon a carriage that gives it motion and strength.

A silver chain around a dog's neck will not prevent his barking or biting.

Good news for husbands—Ladies wear their dresses longer than they used.

At what time should an inn-keeper visit an iron foundry? When he wants a bar-maid.

Adversity does not take from us our true friends; it only disperses those who pretend to be such.

"No pains will be spared," as the quack said when sawing off a poor fellow's leg to cure him of rheumatism.

A stranger to law courts hearing a judge call a sergeant "brother," expressed his surprise. "Oh," said one present, "they are brothers—brothers-in-law."

"Poor old General Debility!" exclaimed Mrs. Partington, "it is surprising how long he lives, and what excitement he creates; the papers are full of remedies for him."

A woman being induced to try the power of kindness on her husband, and being told that it would heap coals of fire on his head, replied that she had tried "boiling water, but it didn't do a bit of good."

"Are them all Bibles?" asked a countryman the other day in the register's office, pointing to the big volumes of wills upon the shelves. "No, sir," answered one of the clerks, "those are *testaments*."

A newspaper correspondent describing the costume of a belle at a recent ball says: "Miss R., with that repugnance to ostentation in dress which is so peculiar to her sex, was attired in a simple white lace collar, fastened with a neat white button solitaire."

Billings says: "I could never find the meaning of the word 'coll-ide' in Webster. But riding one day on the New York railway I saw it all. It was the attempt of two trains to pass each other on a single track. If I remember correctly, it was a shocking failure."

"I think," said a fellow, the other day, "I should make a good member of Congress, for I use their language. I received two bills a short time since, with requests for immediate payment; the one I ordered to be laid on the table—the other to be read that day six months."

A letter from Paris reports that the fashionable women, not contented with wearing crinolines the springs of which are made of pure gold and silver, have taken a fancy to boots with heels plated with the same precious metals. These boots may be seen in the shop windows of some of the fashionable shoemakers.

"If you had avoided rum," said a wealthy though not intelligent grocer to his intemperate neighbor, "your early habits, industry, and intellectual abilities would now have permitted you to ride in your carriage." "And if you had never sold rum for me to buy," replied the bacchanal, "you would have been my driver."

An apothecary's boy was lately sent to leave at one house a box of pills, and at another six live fowls. Confused by the way, he left the pills where the fowls should have gone, and the fowls where the pills had been destined. The people who received the fowls were astonished at the accompanying direction: "Swallow one every two hours."

Twenty or twenty-five years ago old Phleg, up in Madison County, was telling his friend Jones consarnin' of a fight. Phleg had very little education, but Jones was a man of right smart reading. So Phleg went on tellin': "And," says he, "they fit and fit." "And," says Jones, with a knowing look, "did they keep on fittin'?" Old Phleg drawed himself up, and looked as sour as buttermilk into Jones's face. Says he: "You're mighty precise about langwige—FOUT, then, blast you!"

An old fellow in a neighboring town who is original in all things, especially in excessive egotism and profundity, and who took part in the late great Rebellion, was one day blowing in the village tavern to a crowd of admiring listeners, and boasting of his many bloody exploits, when he was interrupted by the question: "I say, old Joe, how many Rebs did you kill during the war?" "How many did I kill, sir? *how many* Rebs did I kill? Well, I don't 'zactly know *how* many; but I know this much—I killed as many o' them *as they did o' me*."